

REVIEWS

Headlandová Kalischová, I. (2010) *Intonation in Discourse. English Intonation as (Mis)used by Czech Speakers*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. 157 pp.

Within the research in the field of the Firbasian theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP), the interplay of factors operating in (authentic) spoken discourse seems to play a somewhat marginal role; it is its written counterpart that wins the scholars' attention most of the time. Being an honourable exception (joining Chamonikolasová 2007), Irena Headlandová Kalischová's recent monograph titled *Intonation in Discourse. English Intonation as (Mis)used by Czech Speakers* deals with aspects of the spoken discourse analysed against the background of FSP. To be more specific, it presents the results of a comparative study of the intonation centre placement in English dialogues read by native English speakers and Czech speakers of English. In her view, even the non-native speakers whose conduct of the English language is near to proficient manifest a clearly discernible foreign accent in their spoken variant and do not necessarily reflect the distribution of the degrees of the so-called communicative dynamism. The monograph is based on the author's doctoral dissertation research, and, moreover, on a long-term apt observation that was made by her during numerous years of teaching Practical English and Phonetics classes: "I have found that even students doing very well on the segmental level suddenly fail when it comes to intonation and their utterances sound conspicuously foreign" (p. 7).

From the theoretical point of view, Headlandová Kalischová's study finds its solid ground in the teaching of the Prague School and its later generations of followers (esp. Daneš 1957, Firbas 1992, and Chamonikolasová 2007). Monitoring the previous research in the field, it is also anchored in other relevant linguistic trends and achievements, in the area of phonetics and phonology in particular (viz. canonical works such as Crystal 1967, O'Connor and Arnold 1973, Quirk et al. 1985, Cruttenden 1986, Roach 1991, etc.). In her introductory theoretical outline concerning intonation, Headlandová Kalischová, logically building on the findings by Brazil 1985, Petr 1986, Gimson 1994, Underhill 1994, Palková 1997, or Krčmová 2007, inter alia, sets out to introduce the basic fundamentals concerning the English (and Czech) intonation systems (viz. Chapters 2 and 3), discussing their common core as well as differences. She claims that intonation represents pivotal linguistic characteristics of any utterance, contributing thus

both to coherence of the text and to the communicative value of speech acts as well as to a smooth flow of spoken interaction.

The main body of the book is organised into four individual parts, which are then complemented by Conclusion, Sources, Index and Summary. In a nutshell, the monograph throws some light on the question whether it is at all possible for Czech users of English to produce intonation in accordance with the actual message of the English text. The initial hypothesis postulated may be summarised as follows: the foreign accent in non-native speakers' oral performance may be present due to "certain intonation patterns transferred from the mother tongue rather than, for example, incorrect articulation of individual sounds" (p. 157). Specifying one of the objectives of her study, Headlandová Kalischová further elaborates this idea, saying that Czech speakers of English generally tend to place the intonation centre on the final element, regardless of meaning or context; this, in her view, definitely results from interference from their mother tongue.

What follows (Chapter 4) is a systematic, yet concise introduction of the cornerstones of the theory of FSP presented from the point of view of the Brno tradition, special attention being logically paid (outside that of context, linear modification and semantics) to the intonation factor. Intonation is rightly understood as a factor of FSP that (even if it cannot operate independently of the other three factors) is capable of disambiguating and affecting the functional interpretation of the utterance. Headlandová Kalischová points out that so as to avoid possible confusion or even misunderstanding, it is very important to place the intonation centre appropriately.

The practical part of the monograph (Chapter 5) offers a detailed description of the corpus material and the database arrangement, the analytical methods used, and, principally, the prosodic analysis of the corpus itself. Namely, in her research Headlandová Kalischová carried out a prosodic analysis of a representative number of recordings of English utterances (scripted dialogues) of various Czech speakers, focusing especially on the placement of the intonation centre. The evaluation criteria were based on the norm set by corresponding recordings provided by native English speakers. The corpus is constituted by five (original or slightly stylised for the purposes of the case study) textbook-based dialogues, containing altogether 5,523 basic distributional fields; the total size of the corpus is approx. 33,000 words. The speakers (179 individuals) were recruited among BA programme students whose conduct of English was to be "approaching C1 level" (p. 50). What I find crucial in terms of the investigation is the fact that the students, even though aware of the potential use of their recordings for academic purposes, were not told exactly what aspects of their oral performance they should be especially careful about. Step by step, the author goes on to discuss

individual parts of the database (Dialogues 1-5), commenting on peculiarities of separate distributional fields (it will be appreciated by the reader that the study contains full versions of the original recorded transcripts, supplemented by prosodic analyses of the speakers' recordings). The analyses are also presented in synoptic charts. In addition to the thorough description of individual sub-corpora, Headlandová Kalischová always provides the reader with a set "selected items" of the given section of the database, such as issues of intonation in compounds, the so-called high-frequency collocations, typographically-marked non-final placement of intonation centre (IC), alternative IC placement, and the like. It should be noted that these observations, demonstrating the author's erudition and thoughtful insights, definitely form the hermeneutic climax of the study.

In the extensive closing chapter (Conclusion), picking up the threads of her hypothesis, Headlandová Kalischová first echoes the assumption that "Czech speakers may often err in cases where the IC should be assigned to an element in a non-final position" (p. 95). To elucidate this claim, she discusses different distributional field subtypes observed in the texts, the criterion being the IC placement. The research proved that the most common type is a distributional field with the intonation centre placed finally, followed by fields with IC in non-final positions and with alternative IC placement. Next, logically enough, the concluding remarks are concerned with the appropriate IC placement in the Czech speakers' utterances; while the Czech speakers showed best results in utterances with final IC (96%), the type with a non-final IC bearer is found to be most problematic to Czech speakers. One of the foci of this part is the one establishing that the Czech speakers manifest a general tendency to prosodically highlight an element in a sentence-final position even in cases when they had a choice of two or three equivalent positions. The inappropriate IC placement in the Czech speakers' utterances is then commented on in several respects; again, the results unequivocally show that there is a clear preference of the Czech speakers to place the IC at the end of an utterance or, at least, as close to it as possible (pp. 99-101). To illustrate this, Headlandová Kalischová creatively and functionally indeed supplies a number of the utterances with misplaced IC with their Czech counterparts. Thus, the picture becomes more plastic and the reader is able to see the contrast between identical IC bearers in different syntactic positions both in English and Czech. Czech, of course, displays a vast majority of these syntactically equivalent IC bearers occupying a final position in the Czech sentence (p. 100). In other words, data analysis along with the conclusions drawn actually verifies the hypothesis postulated at the beginning of the study. It should be noted that in addition to a fitting and well-evidenced interpretation of her findings, Irena Headlandová Kalischová also managed to ground her resourceful

observations in the framework of FSP and, at the same time, in the delicate coordinates of purely phonetic/phonological and generally linguistic (even though seemingly contradictory) view.

What I find to be the greatest benefit of the present volume, though, is its obvious pragmatic-pedagogical implications; not only does Irena Headlandová Kalischová offer a minute analyses of the corpora, but also meritoriously arrives at functional conclusions and provides revealing interpretations of her research. What is especially worth the reader's attention is the elaborate and precise prosodic analysis, rooted in a comparative (English-Czech) approach. Moreover, it is apparent that Headlandová Kalischová succeeded in presenting convincingly both the theoretical background and the practical research in a complex, yet readable and transparent way. This is especially worth pointing out in relation to the fact that intonation is, as a linguistic phenomenon, probably the most impalpable, the least conscious, and – to make use of Headlandová Kalischová's pertinent quote of Brazil (p. 102) – a “slippery” one.

In conclusion, Irena Headlandová Kalischová's *Intonation in Discourse. English Intonation as (Mis)used by Czech Speakers* is undoubtedly a precious and inspiring contribution to the realm of both phonetics and functional linguistics. Broadening horizons of scholarly investigation into the area of intonation seen through the prism of FSP, the study definitely opens new vistas in the given field and is a credit to the legacy of the Prague School.

Martin Adam

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